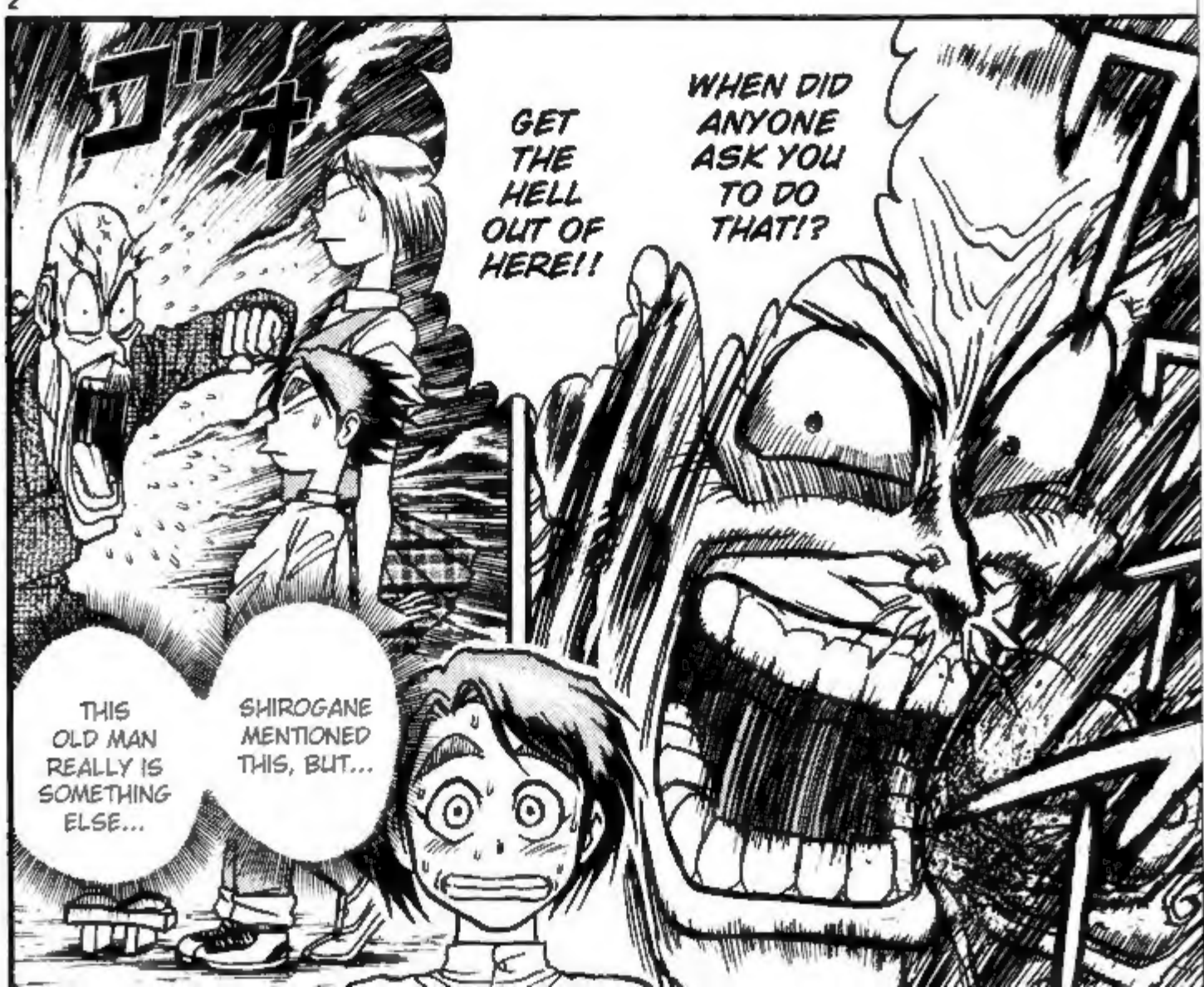
Act 4

Houan vs. Shirogane

I DON'T WANT ANYONE TOUCHING MY EQUIP-MENT!
WE'RE HERE TO CLEAN UP THE MESS WE MADE OF YOUR SHED THE OTHER DAY...

2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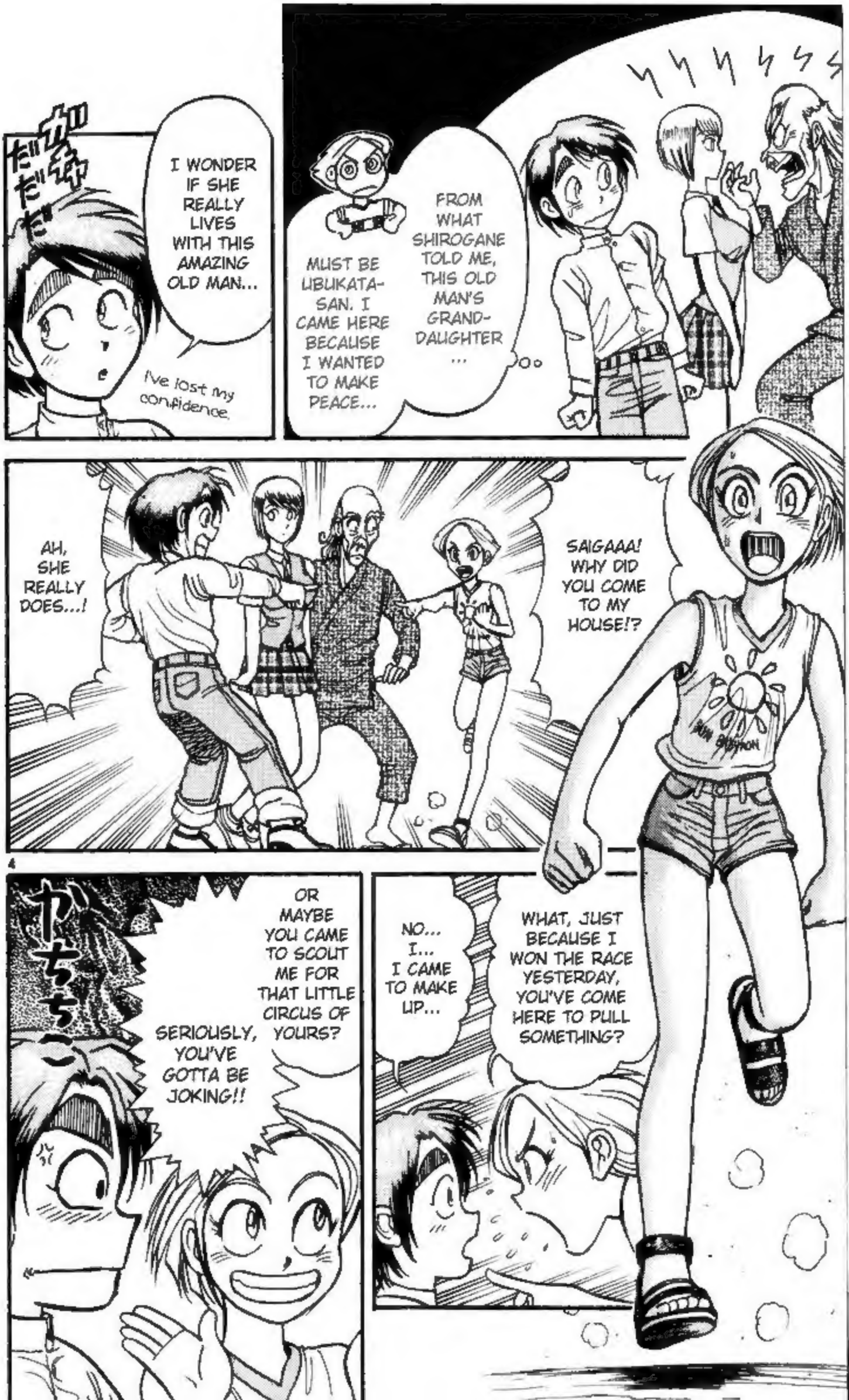
GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE!!
WHEN DID ANYONE ASK YOU TO DO THAT!?
THIS OLD MAN REALLY IS SOMETHING ELSE...
SHIROGANE MENTIONED THIS, BUT...

HMM, BUT IF WE DON'T EVEN ASK HIM A SECOND TIME...
HE'S EVEN MORE PIG-HEADED THAN I THOUGHT HE WAS.
YOU'D BETTER NOT!
YOU'RE GONNA GO BACK AND ASK THE GEEZER TO LEND US THE EQUIPMENT AGAIN?
YOU'D BETTER GIVE UP, SHIRO-GANE.
YEAH, YEAH, HE WAS ALWAYS SAYING THIS WEIRD STUFF ABOUT HOW EQUIPMENT HAS A "HEART".
YOU REALLY SHOULD STOP. ONE TIME WHEN I WAS RIDING A UNICYCLE --
THAT BARKING GEEZER SAID I HADN'T SINCERELY ASKED IT, "PLEASE LET ME RIDE YOU," AND HE KICKED ME OFF.
It's no good.
WELL, GO IF YOU WANT.
YOU'RE JUST AS STUBBORN AS THAT GEEZER, SHIROGANE.
GOOD GRIEF ...
IF I TRY ONE MORE TIME...
BUT...
SHIRO-GANE, I'LL COME TOO.
WELL, THEN...

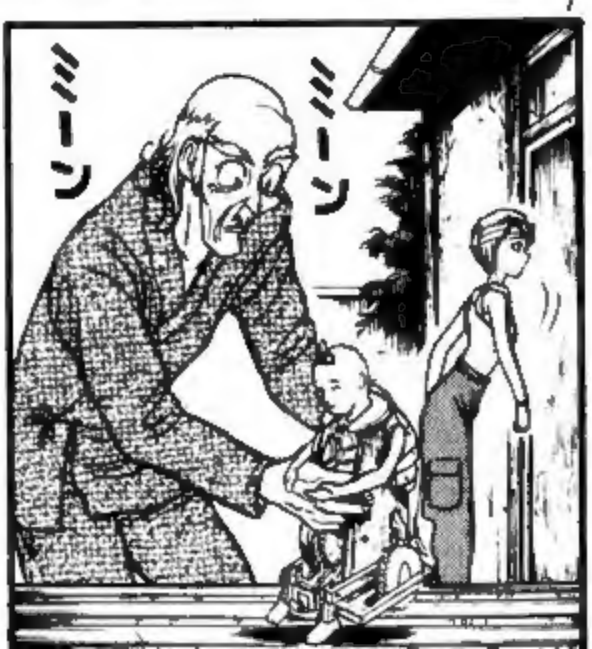

I WONDER IF SHE REALLY LIVES WITH THIS AMAZING OLD MAN...
Ive lost my confidence.
MUST BE UBUKATA-SAN. I CAME HERE BECAUSE I WANTED TO MAKE PEACE...
FROM WHAT SHIROGANE TOLD ME, THIS OLD MAN'S GRAND-DAUGHTER ...
AH, SHE REALLY DOES...!
SAIGAAA! WHY DID YOU COME TO MY HOUSE!?
4
NO... I... I CAME TO MAKE UP...
WHAT, JUST BECAUSE I WON THE RACE YESTERDAY, YOU'VE COME HERE TO PULL SOMETHING?
OR MAYBE YOU CAME TO SCOUT ME FOR THAT LITTLE CIRCUS OF YOURS?
SERIOUSLY, YOU'VE GOTTA BE JOKING!!

WHAT'S THIS, RYOUKO'S FRIEND IS ONE OF THE KIDS WITH NAKAMACHI...
WHAT IS WITH THE WAY YOU TALK!?
WHAT, YOU GOT A PROBLEM!?
HM?
WHAT IS IT?
ALL THE YOUNG FOLK THESE DAYS HAVE THAT KIND OF SLIPPERY FACE.
BUT I'VE HAD IT WITH TRUSTING MEN WITH THIS KIND OF DAMN FACE.
YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS ABOUT IT LOOKING LIKE THAT, CAN YOU!?
THE SAME GOES FOR YOU. EVEN IF YOU SAY YOU WANT TO CLEAN UP...
5
ISN'T IT!?
THE MAIN REASON SHINOBU SENT YOU HERE...
IS TO KISS UP AND ASK ME TO LEND YOU THE TIGHTROPE EQUIPMENT!

HEY, HOLD IT!
DON'T TOUCH MY EQUIPMENT!
WELL THEN ...
NO... IT'S NOTHING.
HEY!
YOU'LL JUST START THROWING IT AROUND AND HANDLING IT CARELESSLY!
YOU YOUNG FOLK HAVE NO RESPECT FOR THE EQUIPMENT!
6

IF YOU DON'T MIND...
I THINK I'LL TIDY THEM UP ... BY TAKING THEM OUT ONE AT A TIME.
JUST DON'T DAMAGE THAT EQUIPMENT.
TCH ...

WELL, SHE'LL GET SLOPPY ABOUT IT...
THAT WOMAN WILL GET WORN OUT SOON AND APOLOGIZE IN TEARS.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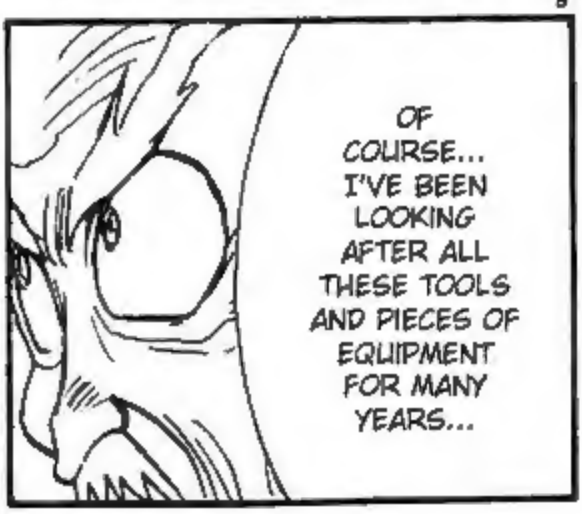
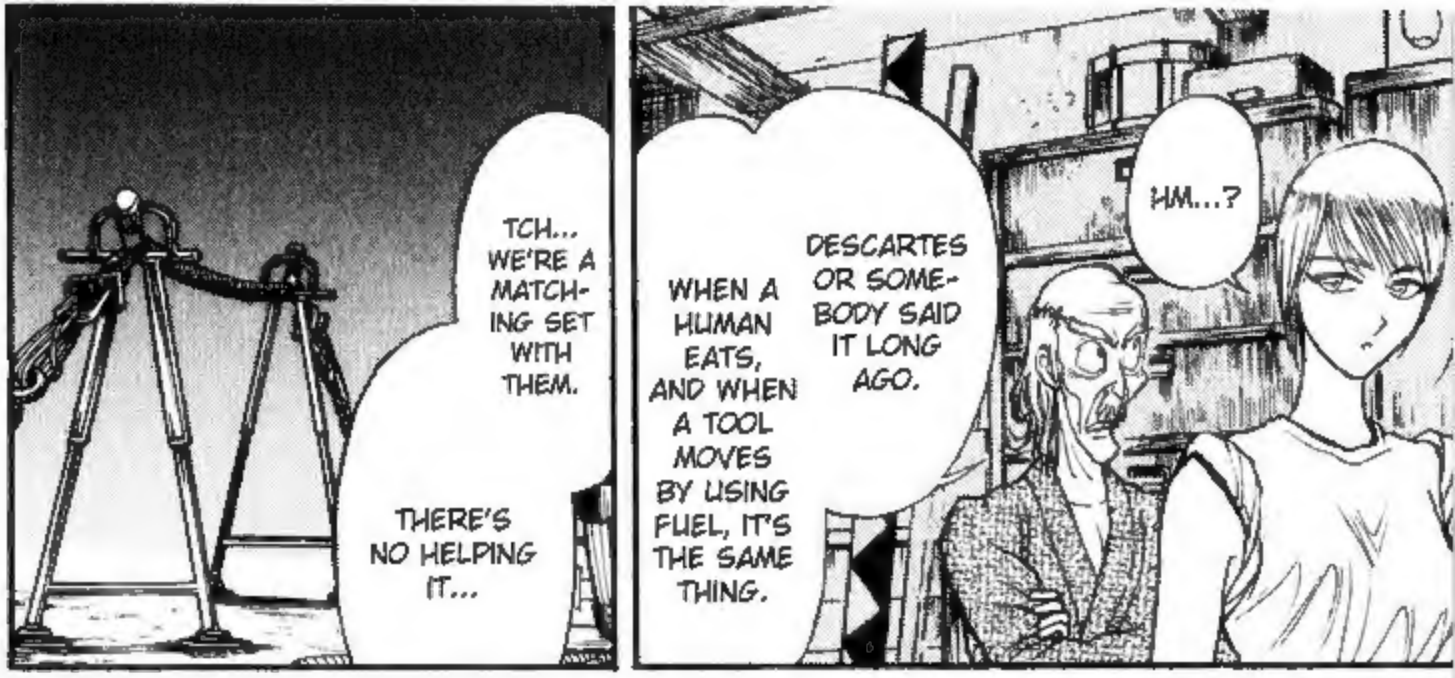
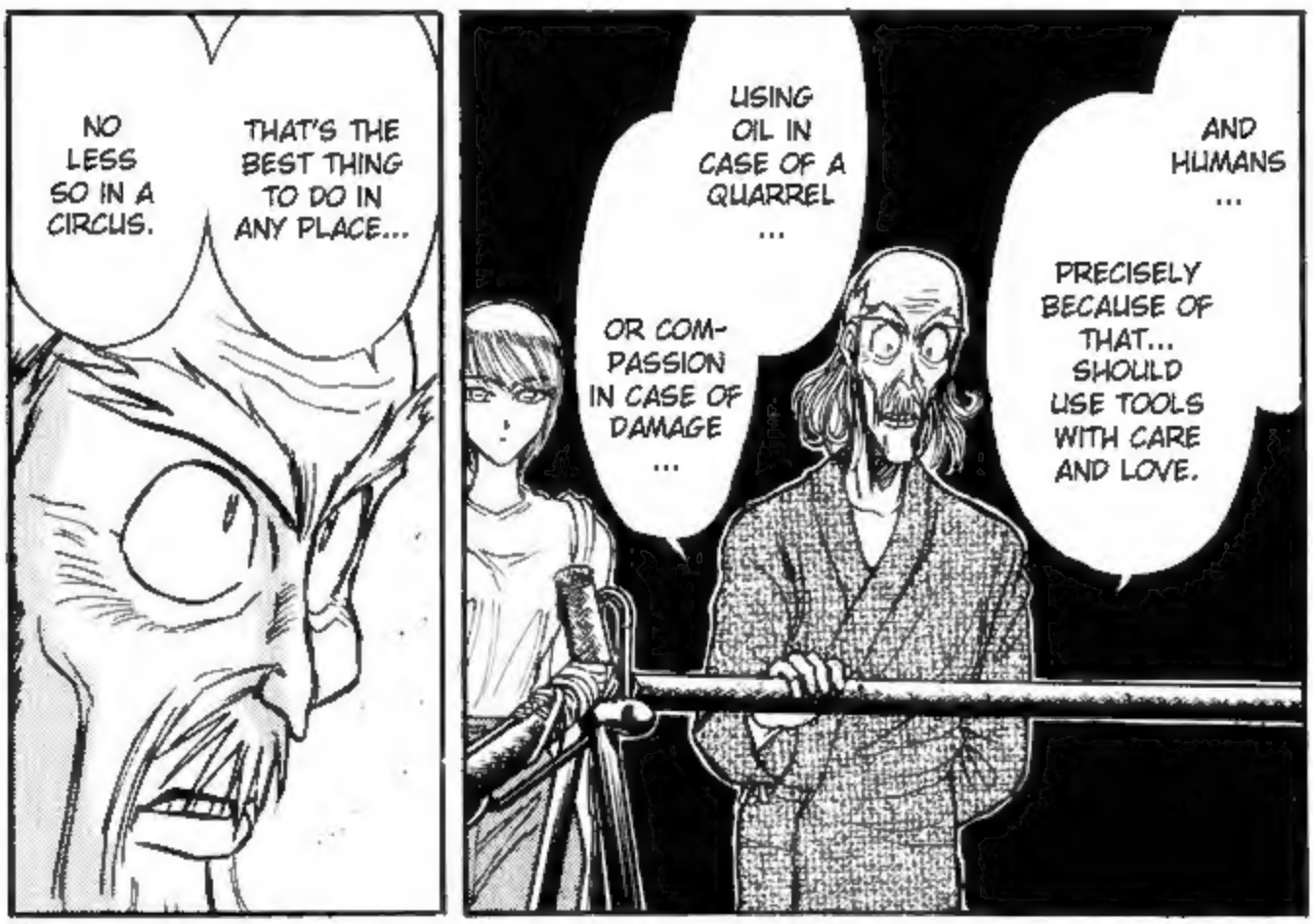
UWAH!
YOU WERE STILL HERE!
EX-CUSE ME ...
I'VE FINISHED ...
NO GOOD ...
DOESN'T WORK THERE EITHER ...
LET'S JUST TAKE A LOOK HERE...
IT'S NOT EVEN NOON YET!
IDIOT!
AS IF YOU COULD HAVE PUT IT ALL BACK AFTER IT WAS SCATTERED LIKE THAT!

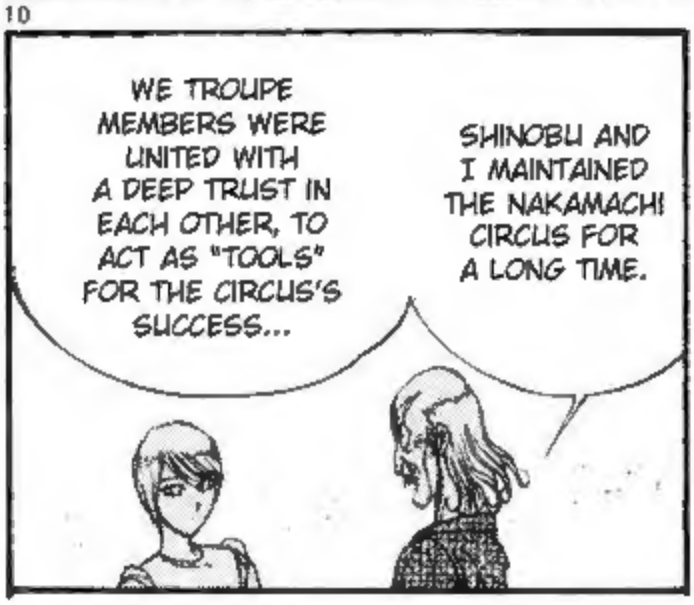
BUT IT'S IN GOOD CONDITION.
THIS EQUIPMENT IS OLD, AND WELL-USED ...
THIS CERTAINLY IS A LOT OF CIRCUS EQUIPMENT.
.....

THAT TOOLS ARE THE SAME AS HUMANS...?
YOU... DID YOU KNOW...
IS THAT SO...


OF COURSE... I'VE BEEN LOOKING AFTER ALL THESE TOOLS AND PIECES OF EQUIPMENT FOR MANY YEARS...


TCH... WE'RE A MATCH-ING SET WITH THEM.
THERE'S NO HELPING IT...
HM...?
DESCARTES OR SOME-BODY SAID IT LONG AGO.
WHEN A HUMAN EATS, AND WHEN A TOOL MOVES BY USING FUEL, IT'S THE SAME THING.


NO LESS SO IN A CIRCUS.
THAT'S THE BEST THING TO DO IN ANY PLACE...
USING OIL IN CASE OF A QUARREL ...
OR COM-PASSION IN CASE OF DAMAGE ...
AND HUMANS ...
PRECISELY BECAUSE OF THAT... SHOULD USE TOOLS WITH CARE AND LOVE.


WE TROUPE MEMBERS WERE UNITED WITH A DEEP TRUST IN EACH OTHER, TO ACT AS "TOOLS" FOR THE CIRCUS'S SUCCESS...
SHINOBU AND I MAINTAINED THE NAKAMACHI CIRCUS FOR A LONG TIME.

THEN... FOR THE CURRENT NAKAMACHI CIRCUS...
DO YOU STILL THINK THIS EQUIP-MENT ISN'T SUITABLE ...?

HE SCAT-TERED US ALL!
NO MATTER WHAT WAS BEING SAID, THE NAKAMACHI CIRCUS STILL MADE PEOPLE HAPPY!
THAT IS WHAT THAT FOOL SHINOBU RUINED WITH HIS STUPID ACTS!
OF WORKING WITH A MASTER WHO COULDN'T BELIEVE IN HIS TOOLS!!
I HAVE NO INTENTION ...
WE TROUPE MEMBERS COULD NO LONGER TRUST HIM AS OUR LEADER!
THAT IDIOT SHINOBU'S PATIENCE WASN'T ENOUGH.
AND YET HE KNOCKED OVER THE TOOLBOX...HE DESTROYED THE CIRCUS.
IF HE WAS BROKEN BY THAT TERRIBLE RUMOR, THERE WERE ANY NUMBER OF US "TOOLS" TO REPAIR THE DAMAGE.

TCH ...
WHAT AM I SAYING!?
IS THAT SO...
BEING YELLED AT BY ME... CLEANING UP FOR A TOUGH OLD MAN...
A YOUNG GIRL...NO, ANYONE WOULD FIND IT UNPLEASANT.
WHY HAVE YOU TAKEN ON THIS THANKLESS JOB?
YOU... WITH THAT KIND OF FACE, AND THAT KIND OF SKILL...
I CAN DO NOTHING ELSE.
IF THERE IS SOMETHING TO DO FOR THE CIRCUS...
I... AM A TOOL.
A TOOL CAN ONLY EVER DO ONE THING.
WHAT IS THAT DOLL?
ER ...
I GET IT... LEAVE.
HMPH, SO YOU'RE HERE TO BORROW EQUIPMENT FOR YOUR CIRCUS.

WHAT YOU SEE IS A RESTOR-ATION, BUT ITS ORIGINAL FORM WAS MADE 200-ODD YEARS AGO...
A KARA-KURI DOLL ...
A WIND-UP PUPPET. IT'S A TEA-SERVING DOLL.
A TOOL OF NO VALUE TO ITS OWNER... AND A DOLL THAT CAN'T BE FIXED.
.....
THIS THING AND I ARE THE SAME.
I'VE TINKERED WITH IT, HOPING TO FIX IT, BUT ...
IT'S TOO MUCH FOR AN AMA-TEUR.
I GOT IT AT A THRIFT SHOP, BUT IT'S BROKEN.
13
THANK YOU.
TCH...WELL, IN EXHANGE FOR YOUR WORK... JUST A LITTLE.
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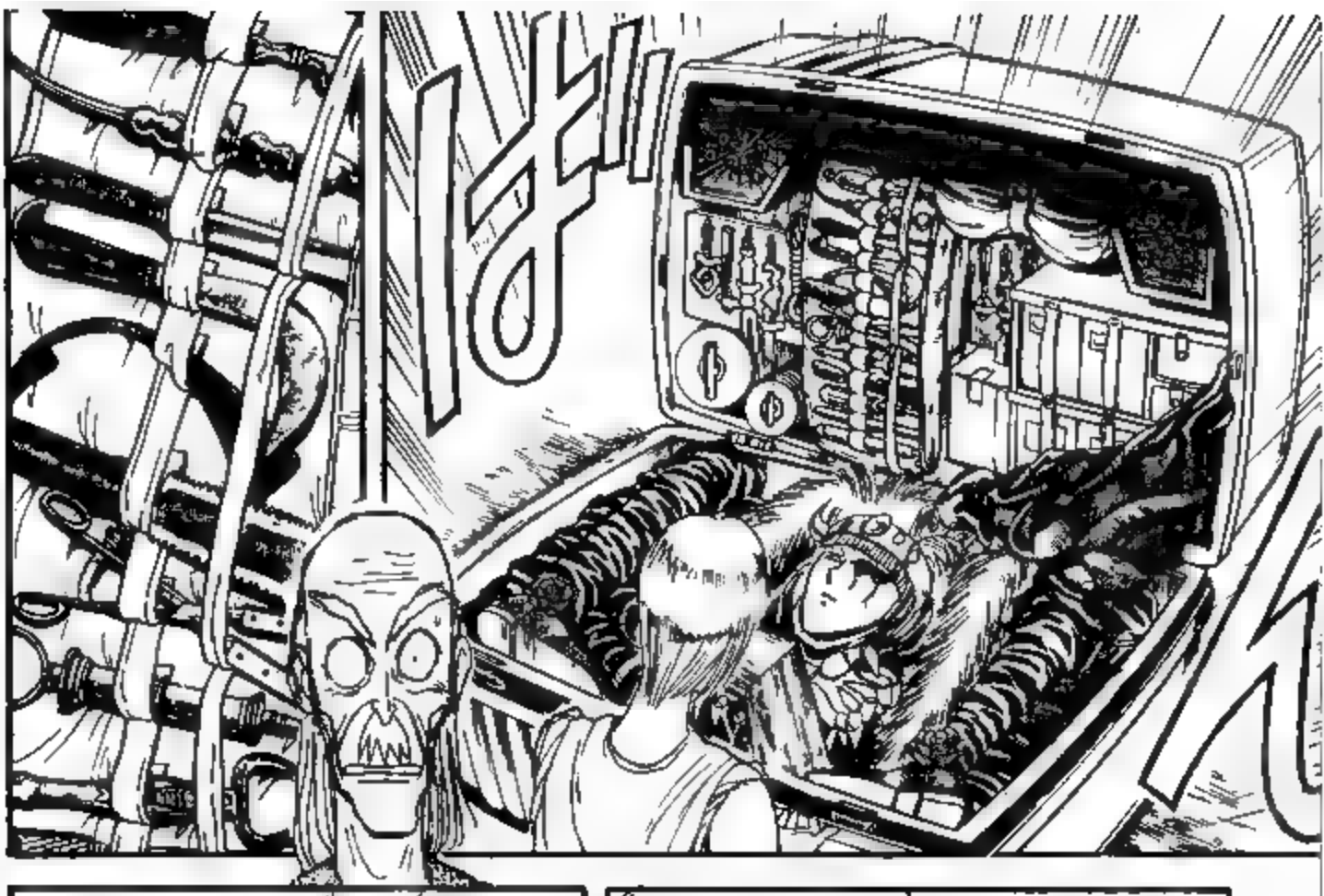
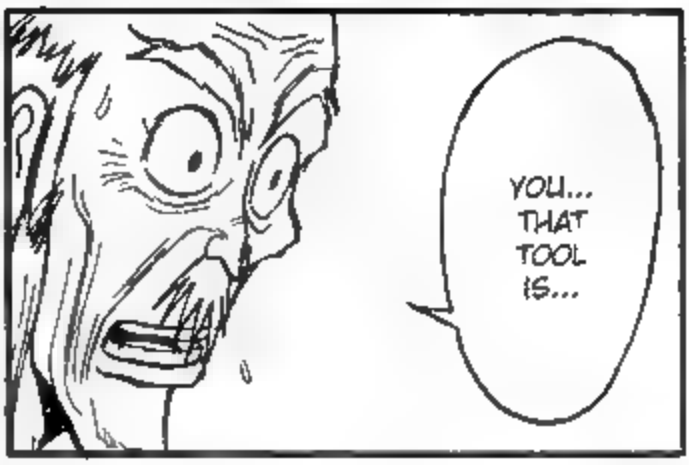
PLEA-SE ...
.....
IT'S NO GOOD NO MATTER WHAT YOU SAY!
ARE YOU SURE YOU WON'T LET ME TOUCH IT EVEN A LITTLE BIT?

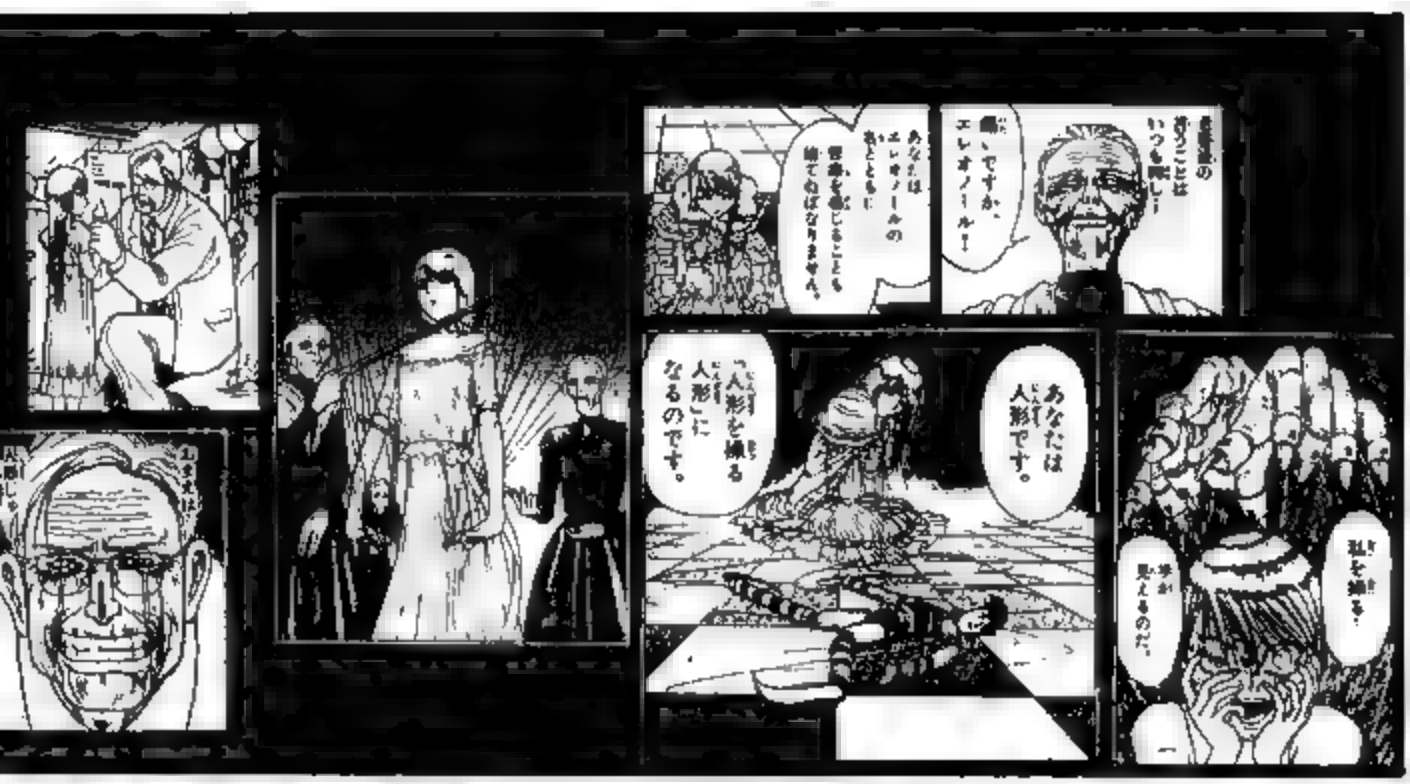


I DEAL WITH PUPPETS A BIT MYSELF...


YOU... THAT TOOL IS...

IN TRUTH, I WAS RAISED AS NOTHING MORE THAN A TOOL.

FROM A VERY EARLY AGE, I—



SHIROGANE, YOU'RE NOT A PUPPET.

HOWEVER, AS A RESULT OF CERTAIN EVENTS...

AND FROM THERE, I HAVE CONTINUED TO CHANGE ...

I CHANGED ...

BESIDES, PEOPLE ARE NOT THINGS ...

UBUKATA-SAN... A BROKEN TOOL CAN BE RECOVERED IF YOU REPAIR IT.

SO ...
WITH-OUT A DOUBT ...
カタ
16
...IT MO-VED!
AHA-HAHA, IT MOVED!
AS MANY TIMES AS THEY NEED TO.
PEOPLE CAN START OVER...
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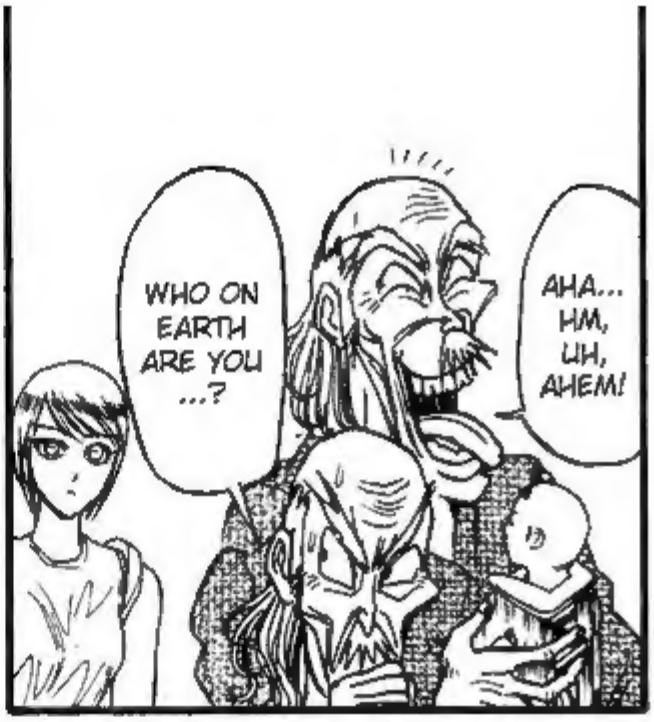
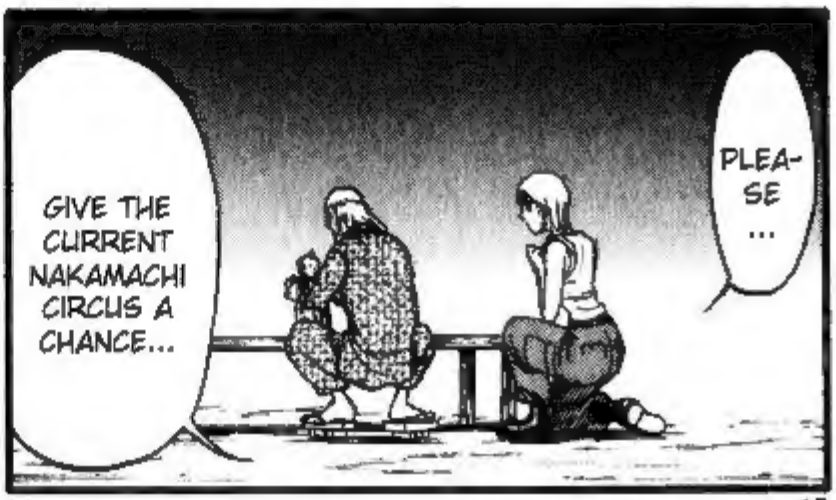
UBUKATA-SAN, YOU DON'T THROW A TOOL AWAY IF IT BREAKS ONCE.
NAKA-MACHI-SAN REGRETS HIS ACTIONS.


WHO ON EARTH ARE YOU ...?
AHA... HM, UH, AHEM!

.....
IS THAT SO ...

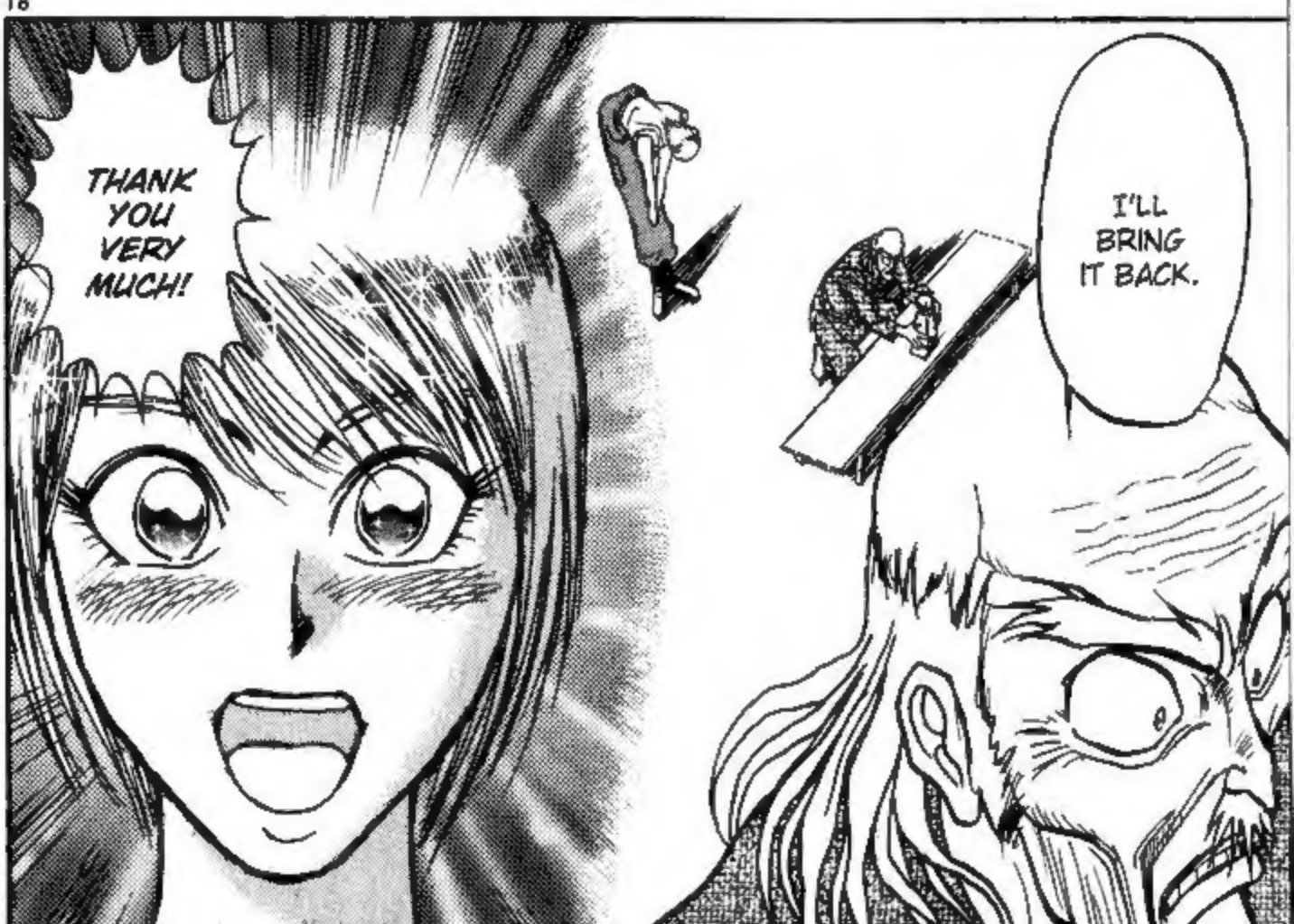
THE TIGHT-ROPE EQUIP-MENT, HUH ...


GIVE THE CURRENT NAKAMACHI CIRCUS A CHANCE...
PLEA-SE ...

17

NO WAY.

HM?
WAIT.
I APO-
LOGIZE
DEEPLY
FOR MY
PRESUMP-
TION.
PLEASE
EXCUSE
ME.
TCH,
THERE'S NO
HELPING IT.
TH-
THEN
...
I SAID
I WOULDN'T
LEND IT TO
NAKAMACHI.
I
DIDN'T
SAY
ANYTHING
ABOUT
YOU.


THANK
YOU
VERY
MUCH!
I'LL
BRING
IT BACK.

translation by funnuraba.tumblr.com

The word used for "tool" and "equipment" (道具, *dougu*) is the same in the Japanese. I've tried to make it sound natural in English while conveying that they refer to the same thing. The same goes for "doll" and "puppet" (人形, *ningyou*) and "to laugh" and "to smile" (笑う, *warau*), which of course have both been very important words in this manga. I will try to avoid it, but there may be some unavoidable inconsistencies, so be aware that all these words originally cover overlapping concepts.

Thanks to Judash137 on the mangafox forums for removing the Japanese text, and to the anonymous person who tipped me off to that!

Any group with more experience or skill is welcome to take over at any time or to redo chapters I have already done if they are below the quality that this series deserves.